The Kantian idea of hope - Bridging the gap between our imperfection and our duty to perfect ourselves

The introduction to a recent special issue of this journal on Kant, evil, moral perfection and education sought to situate the included essays as acknowledgments of the vulnerabilities and imperfections human beings face in the pursuit of moral perfection. The editors' hope for the issue was to bring attention to the need to work with those vulnerabilities and imperfections, 'to neither neglect nor burden ourselves with these limitations, but to respond responsively to them through education and social change' (Roth & Formosa, 2018, 3). My aim, in this paper, is to propose that one way education can respond to the needs of free but finite agents, with an innate propensity to radical evil, is through acknowledging and extending the role of hope from what has been addressed and discussed in the papers in the special issue. I will argue that hope plays an enabling role for human agents, mediating the seemingly unstable relationship between imperfect moral agents, characterised by radical evil, and their duty to elevate themselves to the idea of moral perfection in an uncertain world. I will conclude by linking these ideas on imperfect agency and hope to a practical commitment to viewing the educator as an imperfect but hopeful (impure) role model, thereby addressing a theme in current thinking about character education: the relatability criterion for moral exemplars.

In section one I will outline the apparent contradiction: how can an obligation to perfect ourselves morally be asked of such modest creatures? In section two, I will propose that our moral landscape is not so bleak; we may always have hope. The final section of this paper will specifically address some of the essays included in the special issue, with a view to showing how a conception of hope can answer the editors' call to respond to the concerns of free but imperfect moral agents and educators.

**I**

According to Kant it is our duty to bring ourselves to the ideal of moral perfection (Kant, 1998, 6:61). By that is meant we have a duty to attain, for ourselves, a good disposition with a will sharpened, by our effort, towards duty. If moral educators are to contribute towards this aim, then they must start with a knowledge of their raw materials. Only through a recognition of the sort of moral agency their students can be expected to exemplify, can the educator equip themselves with the means of facilitating students on the path towards moral perfection.

Unlike Kant's idea of God, who of necessity acts from the moral law, the human nature is frail (Kant, 1998, 6:37). The human will does not perfectly accord with the moral law. In fact, it is just this imperfection that makes the concept of duty comprehensible. Were we god-like in this respect, it would make no sense to say we ought to do such and such (Kant, 1996, 6:228); we just would do such and such. Like breathing in and breathing out, our action would accord with the moral law effortlessly. It is only because of our frailty, that our moral landscape includes the concept of duty and moral imperatives.

As human beings, we are creatures of the natural world, and since 'everything in nature works in accordance with laws' (Kant, 1998b, 4:412), our behaviour can be described in terms of laws and imperatives. As natural creatures, we have certain needs. If certain subjective principles are posited (like hunger for example), our action can be explained in terms of our inclinations. Everything else being equal, my inclination for food will explain my eating, much like a dog's hunger will explain a dog's eating. Yet, our animality, in this respect, is only a part of our nature. Our power of choice might be affected by our inclinations and needs (arbitrium sensitivum), but unlike the dog our power

of choice is not brutum but liberum (Kant, 1998b, 4:428). The sensitivity of our power of choice to the inclinations does not render us captive. It may well be that everything in nature works in accordance with laws, but we, as human beings, have a faculty for representing certain laws to ourselves (Kant, 1998b, 4:427), and determining our action in accordance with those laws, independently from our sensible impulses (Kant, 1998c, A534/B562). We are, in this sense, free. So, for the human will to be not brutum but liberum amounts to the recognition that we are a part of nature and as such subject to natural impulses, need and inclination. We are also reasoning beings, and as such capable of recognising the unconditional commands of morality.

Morality in the Kantian sense, and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is singular in terms of the worth it bestows (Kant, 1998b, 4:435). Yet, were we to look for a paragon of Kantian virtue amongst ourselves, we may well be a long time looking. In one sense, the search would be self-defeating. The content of others' maxims are not the sort of thing that can be known by us. In fact, we are often misled as to the content of our own maxims (Kant, 1998, 6:20). If we cannot have knowledge concerning the maxim upon which an action is based, then it is hard to see how we could ever be convinced as to anyone's (including our own) good disposition. They may seem to acting according to duty in an almost Christ-like way (Kant, 1998, 6:62), but they could be driven by the inclination of self-love rather than the commitment to duty. Perhaps this apparently Christ-like person basks in others' positive reinforcement or feels superior to others when their actions appear moral; and perhaps it is these self-directed feelings that motivate their action.

Moreover, humanity, as we are presented with it, through an examination of our society, paints a far from rosy picture. As I write, a gunman in Pittsburgh has allegedly murdered 11 people at a Synagogue; apparently basing his action on the fear of a potential genocide against the white race. Moreover, today's newspaper describes the biggest serial killing trial in Germany (the potential death toll could be as many as 200 victims). Reportedly, the killer acted on feelings of self-aggrandisement; a nurse, he injected victims with a potentially lethal medication in order to 'bring them back to life' at the last moment. Clearly, these are not isolated incidents; nor are they the sole provenance of individuals. The history of mankind can be recounted in terms of systematic, violent acts, seemingly perpetrated out of fear or the quest for power, from the Salem witch trials to the Final Solution. For Kant too, 'the multitude of woeful examples that the experience of human deeds parades before us' (Kant, 1998, 6:33) was evidence to the fact that the human being is far from Christ-like. In fact, Kant takes it that such examples warrant us in thinking of humanity as rooted in evil, or having a natural propensity to evil, or in the terms Kant uses most often 'radically evil' (Kant, 1998, 6:30).

Radical evil may result in monstrous acts; yet, with reference to our character, it is less about the wickedness of a James Bond villain, and more about the corruption of a being with a capacity for good. Our radical evil does not lie in our rejection of morality as such. The radically evil human being is still a being capable of determining himself according to duty; in fact, the human being has a moral predisposition in virtue of which the moral law seems to impose itself irresistibly (Kant, 1998, 6:36). So, in doing the evil deed, the agent does not revoke his commitment to morality as such, instead they simply subordinate the incentive to act according to duty, prioritising instead their sensible incentives (self-love) (Kant, 1998, 6:36)[1]. The evil person, then, does not say 'morality is a myth, I will act how I want', rather they tell themselves; 'morality is a fact, but acting as I want is more

[1] It would seem that, for Kant, there is a relationship between weakness of will and evil. For a discussion of the three grades of evil, and how weakness of will is related to radical evil, see Roth (2018).

worthwhile'. It may be the case that the resulting action happens to accord both with a maxim motivated by duty and self-love. In such a case, the radically evil agent may indulge in self-deception; telling themselves they acted according to duty, when in fact duty was a subordinate motivation. In fact, our tendency to self-deception may be ambitious. We may convince ourselves that actions, which are entirely inconsistent with duty, were demanded from us by the moral law. The above examples of contemporary and historic evils might add credence to this account of our tendency towards self-deception (individual and collective). Although the acts themselves are far from dutiful, the rhetoric of the aggressors might be termed moralistic; whether that be Robert Bowers' (the Pittsburgh gunman) self-conceived heroism as articulated through his social media posts or Heinrich Himmler's speech to SS officers in Posen[2], commending their virtue in the face of the Final Solution.

So, as imperfectly rational beings we contain within us a power of choice, not brutum but liberum, sensitive to affection by our inclinations but not determined by them; capable of determining itself in accordance with the laws of reason but not with the necessity associated with the holy will. Our imperfections limit us in important ways. Our capacity for moral knowledge is constrained. We cannot say we know others have acted morally. In fact, we cannot even say we know *we* have acted morally. Our power of self-deception is forceful; it would seem we like to think of ourselves as moral agents, subject to duty, even in the presence of our most hideously evil acts. Our imperfection, together with our ability to deceive ourselves and others, renders moral imputability 'entirely uncertain' (Kant, 1998, 6:38), and as such, for Kant, constitutes 'the foul stain of our species' (Kant, 1998, 6:38). We may have a power of choice that is liberum, but on this account we are morally frail[3]. Modest creatures indeed, we can never be sure of our own virtue, nor can we rely on the virtue of others.

This modesty stands in contrast to our duty to perfect ourselves. Such a duty implies strengthening that part of ourselves capable of recognising the moral law and determining our action in accordance with it repeatedly until we are in possession of a good disposition. Moreover, here 'imperfectly' good, would not seem to be good enough. As Kant states

> It is our universal human duty to *elevate* ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, i.e. to the prototype of moral disposition in its entire purity, and for this the very idea, which is presented to us by reason for emulation, can give us force (Kant, 1998, 6:61)

In the next two sections, I will address the difficulty of reconciling our imperfection and our duty to thus elevate ourselves. I will propose that hope is a necessary component in the explanation of how we can be both imperfect and obligated to pursue our perfection. Moreover, in the final section I will address the idea of emulating perfection. I will argue that the emulation of an idea is not to be confused with the idea that we should emulate perfect moral exemplars.

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[2] The speech is an attempt, by Himmler, to address the difficulties SS officers face in executing the final solution. In it he congratulates the officers for maintaining decency in the face of their task. The final lines state: I will never see it happen that even one . . . bit of putrefaction comes in contact with us, or takes root in us. On the contrary, where it might try to take root, we will burn it out together. But altogether we can say: We have carried out this most difficult task for the love of our people. And we have suffered no defect within us, in our soul, in our character.

[3] Cardinal Pell might be viewed as a contemporary example of this sort of moral frailty. As a powerful member of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Pell might have served as a paradigm of moral behaviour, consistent with his free power of choice. Rather, his conviction seems to highlight his moral frailty.

**II**

The sort of imperfection and frailty, outlined above, might make the moral landscape we are confronted with seem very bleak. Morality may appear a Sisyphean task, an uphill struggle by constitutively frail beings towards an unreachable endpoint. The task then of the moral educator is doubly arduous; not only must they struggle with their own radically evil nature, but they must also help their students towards the unreachable goal of moral perfection. Yet, there is a much more humane understanding of this struggle available to the Kantian, one which acknowledges our imperfection while refusing to accept that imperfection as a burden. The key to this understanding lies in two related ideas. First, uncertainty is different from ignorance, and does not necessitate moral impotence. Second, in the absence of knowledge, there may be hope.

One of the most well known lines from Kant's First Critique is: 'I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge to make room for faith' (Kant, 1998c, Bxxx; cf. A745/B773). This 'enabling of faith through the constraint of knowledge' depends on a tripartite understanding of cognition. In the First Critique, and elsewhere, Kant distinguishes belief or faith (Glaube) from opining (Meinen) and knowing (Wissen) (Kant, 1998c, A820-B848ff.; cf. CJ 140ff. Kant, 1998, 8:141). For Kant, Glaube is different to Meinen and Wissen, and the difference is not a mere matter of degree; Glaube is a different sort of thing to Meinen and Wissen, and it is not to be taken as inferior to Wissen (Kant, 1998, 8:141). Glaube is the holding of something to be true, in the absence of objective grounds (and so unlike Wissen, we are not justified in assenting to the proposition as knowledge) for reasons that are subjectively sufficient (and so unlike Meinen, we are justified in some sense in assenting to the proposition). So what does this 'some sense' amount to? The first thing to note about Glaube is that it is applicable to situations where one must make a judgment, yet one is constrained by the fact that one cannot attain knowledge about certain salient aspects of the situation. As such, reason has a need, which cannot be supplied by theoretical deduction (Kant, 1998, 8:139). Glaube involves the agent's activity as end setter. Glaube functions to enable the end setter to accomplish the actions necessary for achieving their end (Kant, 1998, 8:141; Chignell, 2007, 338). So, the sense in which Glaube justifies us in assenting to a proposition is a practical one. The proposition will have a practical merit (Chignell, 2007, 338) connected to an end we have set ourselves. Situations that call for Glaube, then, will involve an agent as setting an end for themselves; that end will mandate action, and authentic, firm assent by the agent will be necessary to take that action to fulfil that end. Consider then the teacher, given the advice by a colleague to give up on trying to help Jonathan to tell the truth, as he is, in the colleague's opinion, constitutively incapable of adopting maxims based on the principle of honesty. Contrary to the advice, the teacher comes to the resolution to help Jonathan on his path towards moral perfection, and she sets the end of fostering in Jonathan a love for the truth. This end necessitates action on her part (perhaps researching books with characters like Jonathan who overcome barriers to become better people). As such, then, the situation calls for Glaube. The teacher cannot know, but must believe Jonathan capable of moral action; or, in terms that suit the purpose of this paper, she must hope[4].

The relevance of this discussion of Glaube (and hope as a species of Glaube) is that, though, on the Kantian scheme, knowledge may be denied to the moral agent, this does not condemn us to ignorance and moral impotence. Wissen may not be available to us, but Glaube is. We may not know much when it comes to morality, but we can hope. In one sense, then, hope is a necessary precondition of moral

[4] For the purposes of this paper, I will be understanding hope and faith as similar insofar as they are species of belief, and as such share the same structure.

agency, and indispensable to agents, committed to virtue, but faced with their own limitations. Were it the case that all we had was ignorance, then agency could be construed as impossible. In such a situation, our own behaviour would seem arbitrary to us; determined by forces outside our control or even understanding. Such a picture of humanity is chaotic, or in Kant's terms 'disordered', wherein 'freedom in thinking finally destroys itself if it tries to proceed in independence of the laws of reason' (Kant, 1998, 8:146). While uncertainty is characteristic of the Kantian approach to morality, free agency is still a capacity we share as human agents. We cannot know that our moral action will have effect in our uncertain world, indeed it may be that we are perpetually frustrated; but as Onora O'Neill (1996, 282) states, 'we must entertain at least a minimal hope that the future on which we take our action to bear is a future on which it can bear.' Thus we need hope to bridge the gap between our understanding of ourselves as part of our uncertain world and our conception of ourselves as moral beings.

Moreover, hope can explain how we can appreciate our radical evil, while also holding ourselves to a duty to elevate ourselves to the idea of moral perfection. Here the distinction between a mode of thought and a mode of sense (Kant, 1998, 6:48) is important. When we appreciate our commitment to virtue, as a mode of thought, we are appreciating virtue according to its intelligible character (Kant, 1998, 6:47). Bringing the radically evil person to endorse this commitment takes a kind of rebirth as a 'new man'. This revolution involves a decision to no longer subordinate the maxim of duty to that of self-love, therefore becoming 'by principle and attitude of the mind, a subject receptive of the good' (Kant, 1998, 6:48). My way of understanding this 'duty to elevate ourselves' can be fleshed out by specifying how we ought to orientate ourselves, using an idea of virtue. Kant's discussion of Glaube in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, begins with a description of how, when pure reason extends itself beyond the bounds of experience, it finds no object of intuition at all, but merely a space for an object (Kant, 1998, 8:136). Perhaps, Kant means by this 'space' something akin to the 'subjective ground of differentiation' (the difference between left and right) we use to orientate ourselves geographically (Kant, 1998, 8:135). Moreover, perhaps virtue, in its intelligible character, as presented to us by reason, fills that space needed by reason to orientate us towards moral improvement. To ameliorate ourselves from radical evil in the direction of moral perfection, we may need something of a revolution. Instead of, all at once, committing ourselves to the Sisyphean task of obligating a frail creature to the demands of perfect morality, the revolution would entail a change in how that creature orientates himself. Instead of a heart with the ultimate aim of self-love, this 'new-man' would direct his will towards the idea, rather than the demands, of moral perfection in the hope that he can become a better man. He would thus experience a revolution in his mode of thought, yet his mode of sense may not be subject to such a huge disruption.

I take it that mode of sense (*Sinnesart)* can be understood as the art or the style of perception. It is how we take our world to be, as it appears to us through perception. As outlined earlier, morality as it is applicable to the human being, appears to us in terms of moral necessitation (or 'ought'). It is then, compatible with accepting perfect virtue as an idea, to hold that the path towards this intelligible idea is to be tread in small steps. Moreover, it is also consistent with the distinction of virtue as a mode of thought, and virtue as a mode of sense, that this journey is one made by constitutively frail, imperfect and vulnerable creatures in an environment of uncertainty. Once again, it is hope that mediates this seemingly unstable relationship between frail moral agents, characterised by radical evil, and their duty to elevate themselves to the idea of moral perfection. As Kant states, immediately after noting that it is a revolution that makes the 'new-man':

> But he is a good human being only in incessant labouring and becoming; i.e. he can hope – in view of the purity of the principle which he has adopted as the supreme maxim of his power

> of choice, and in view of the stability of this principle – to find himself upon the good (though narrow) path of constant *progress* from bad to better (Kant, 1998, 6:48)

As such then, moral perfection is an idea to navigate by, and it is an idea that, once accepted by human beings, mandates gradual reform. Such reform will never end in the knowledge that we have attained perfect virtue and a truly good disposition, but it may give us hope for ourselves and (even) others. I will return to this distinction between a mode of thought and a mode of sense in the next section of this paper, while discussing Allen Wood's essay.

So hope demarcates a space for moral agency; hope allows for the moral agent to recognise their imperfections and their lack of knowledge but saves her from moral impotence in the face of chaotic ignorance. Moreover, hope allows us to believe that we can ameliorate our moral situation through constant labouring towards the idea of perfect virtue. In the next section, I will, in more general terms, address how this conception of hope might help in meeting the editors' wish to respond responsively to our own limitations through education and social change. In so doing, I will engage with some of the themes and arguments raised by two of the authors included in the special issue and link them to one practical consideration on how teachers might respond to their students by reflecting on their own limitations, and engage in what I will term 'impure role modelling'.

**III**

Many of the essays included in the special issue allude to hope, or they discuss the sorts of concerns that motivated the conception of hope outlined in section II. With respect to the value of hope, perhaps Klas Roth's (2018) essay is most informative. Roth's essay is concerned with the role of education (and society) in facilitating us in making ourselves efficacious, autonomous and creative with respect to the morally permissible ends we set ourselves; helping us to not merely pursue already set ends or refusing to constrain ourselves to pursue ends already set, but to always respect ourselves as ends in ourselves, which in turn suggests that we view ourselves and others as causes of new ends (Roth, 2018, 7). As it is delineated above, hope is integrally related to our activity as ends' setters. Moreover, the value of hope is best understood in terms of being that which warrants us in thinking of ourselves as capable of setting ends ourselves and finding creative ways of achieving those ends, even in the face of our imperfection and vulnerability.

To be hopeful one must assent in an authentic way to the end set. As shown in section II, hope, as a species of Glaube, functions to enable agents to act in a way necessary for achieving their ends, in uncertain situations that mandate action. As such, firm and authentic assent is necessary from the agent. The authentic and firm assent implied by this conception of hope is continuous with Roth's arguments concerning our capacity as ends' setters. Even in the case that we are hopeful in relation to ends set for us by others, the sort of assent necessary for hope would mean that we 'set these ends anew' for ourselves rather than merely follow them without reflective endorsement. For example, a teacher may agree with the school's policy to engage in the character education of pupils. Here, though the end may be set by the school, it is one assented to by the teacher in a way (authentically and firmly) that might imply hopeful agency. Yet, it may well be that the institutions, within we operate, set ends that do not allow us to authentically 'set these ends anew'. It may be, for example, that the school has, as part of its policy, a commitment to character education, but in reality prioritises attainment and results, and does not allow time or resources to be allocated to the teaching of moral education. Moreover, the school may put pressure on the teacher to compromise himself in the pursuit of these ends (encouraging undue pressure to be placed on children, even encouraging the absence of certain children during exam time etc). Here then, the teacher can allow the school to set ends for him, and see his role as becoming efficacious in terms of meeting those

ends (perhaps in terms of the sort of grade data he can show for his classes). Yet, hope in relation to the character education of his students might be reduced to nothing. The teacher may view the lack of institutional support and the tension between teaching to the test and educating for character as making his action in pursuit of the end of character education unproductive. For hope to obtain, an agent must see himself as the cause of the end, be these already set ends or newly chosen ones. As such then, the idea of hope I have tried to elucidate, is consistent with viewing ourselves as beings 'capable of engaging in the free play between imagination and understanding so that we can set new ends, in particular morally permissible ones' (Roth, 2018, 1).

Roth's essay is also informative when it comes to how one can begin to teach to this idea of agency (imperfect but hopeful). Roth (2018, 8) argues that education should allow people to become as conscientious as possible in their moral self-examination. I too believe that in order to address students of moral education as imperfect, vulnerable but hopeful agents, the teacher must make use of self-examination, yet my preferred way of starting the task of facilitating self-knowledge among students may differ from the approaches taken in this special issue. I believe the best device a teacher has, in this endeavour, is to involve the students in coming to know the teacher too. The teacher has at his resource, his own experience of morality; his virtue, of unparalleled worth; but also his imperfection in the face of his uncertainty and his particular vulnerabilities and tendencies to vice. It is with the teacher as an impure moral exemplar in mind, that I come to view one particular aspect of Kant's arguments on moral perfection as potentially confusing.

One way of addressing this confusion is to use part of Allen Wood's essay (2018) to describe the tension in Kant's account. Wood cites the same paragraph in *Religion* (Kant, 1998, 6:61), which I used earlier, to argue that our moral striving must involve a conversion of the heart and as such 'the imitation of an ideal of humanity', Jesus Christ, 'the personified idea of the good principle, and the putting off of the 'Old Man', in order to put on 'the New Man' (Wood, 2018, 4). Now much depends on how we flesh out 'imitation of an ideal' here. It may be the case that Wood means that such a conversion of the heart needs an orientation, as I have outlined above. Yet, he may mean that we should look to Jesus Christ as a moral exemplar. I believe this would be problematic, given the interpretation of Kant I have thus far delineated. It would fail to adequately capture what it means to be an imperfect, vulnerable agent, constrained by radical evil and operating in a world of uncertainty. The distance between our moral agency and Jesus Christ is insurmountable. Moreover, there is reason to hold that Kant was himself aware of this issue. When addressing Christ's sacrifice, Kant states:

> The idea of conduct in accordance with so perfect a rule of morality could no doubt also be valid for us, as a precept to be followed. Yet he himself could *not* be presented to us *as an example to be emulated*, hence also not as proof that so pure and exalted a moral goodness can be practised and attained *by us* (Kant, 1998, 6:64)

Contrary to the idea that we should emulate perfect moral exemplars, my interpretation of Kant implies that we should look far closer to home for our role models. Here, I believe that a narrow focus on the incomparable worth of a good will, without a recognition of a role model's imperfection and vulnerability, would be counter-productive. In contrast, it is incumbent on the moral educator to tap into her students' imperfections and the evil rooted in their nature. One way of doing this is for the teacher to tap into her own nature and her own struggle with her radical evil in her pursuit of moral perfection.

The idea that teachers can use their own imperfect nature as a tool for moral education (thereby showing themselves to be impure role models) may be consistent with current research in education, and character education in particular.

The study of emulation, and the use of role models and exemplars, is a well-ploughed field of research in character education. Of particular interest, in this literature, is a recent trend to stress the importance of the relatability of the exemplar (Engelen et al 2018; Aish, Asare and Miskioglu, 2018; Vos, 2017). The idea behind what I will term the relatability criterion is that, in order to motivate emulation, an exemplar should not be flawless (Engelen et al, 2018; Zagzebski, 2017, chapter 3). Such exemplars should be recognisably human, otherwise they may seem too distant and remote to those seeking a moral role model:

> When moral exemplars turn out to have flaws or at least idiosyncrasies, experience moments of weakness, and are revealed to be human, they are more relatable than the all too perfect, god-like and out-of-reach creatures that populate hagiographies (Engelen et al, 2018, 353)

A Kantian approach to education, which stresses imperfection, radical evil, but also hope for moral improvement towards ideal virtue can meet this relatability criterion. I have argued elsewhere (Dineen, 2019) that the struggle, which is produced by the tension between the power our inclinations hold for us and the respect we have for the moral law within us, is, itself of worth. One way a teacher might encourage her students on their path towards moral perfection is to share her particular struggles, through impure role modelling. For example, here the teacher could use a particular example where she struggled to act according to duty, and even perhaps failed to act according to duty. Her example could involve self-deception, and it could also involve a practical instantiation of her vulnerability to radical evil. The teacher might describe a situation like the following. As a birthday treat, the teacher ordered some chocolates for herself. When they arrived, she saw that packed inside was not one box, but two; the chocolate company had made a mistake and sent her an extra box. She might share, with her students, that she has a particular weakness for these chocolates, which are prohibitively expensive. The teacher might then use this example to discuss her moral reasoning, her decision and the repercussions of that decision for her own moral agency. She could explain her weakness of will, in this instance, and her characteristic tendency to evil when faced with particular temptations. This example is not meant as a moral dilemma, to be discussed with the aim of arriving at the right answer. Rather, it is meant to show how fallible human beings are; how we lie to ourselves (the keeping of the chocolates would hurt nobody, it is after all her birthday, she ought to keep the chocolates thereby preventing an employee being rebuked for an error), how we can make mistakes and how, even in the presence of a will turned towards self-love rather than duty, we can have hope in our own moral improvement. The teacher might discuss the aftermath of this decision; perhaps she might dwell on her feelings of disorientation (given the above discussion of a revolution in one's mode of thought), and how she used this experience as a chance to reassess her priorities and make small steps towards strengthening her will. By taking the opportunity to illustrate the moral struggle through showing herself as an impure role model, the teacher does not burden herself with her moral failures (Roth, 2018, 7), indeed she is showing her students that such failures need not be burdensome; they are at once understandable given the sorts of beings we are, and addressable given that we can always have hope in our capacity to act in accordance with the moral law.

**IV**

I began this paper by referring to the special issue on Kant, evil, moral perfection and education. I see the contribution of this paper, through delineating a Kantian conception of hope, to be a 'drawing' out, in the direction of hope, themes present in many of the essays included in the special issue. My object, in this paper, was to sketch a conception of hope that might inform a practical aspect of moral education (the impure role model), and so I chose the specific essays (Roth, and Wood's) that would best allow me to accomplish this task. As I have described it, hope warrants us in thinking of ourselves as capable of setting ends ourselves and finding creative ways of achieving those ends, even in the face of our imperfection and vulnerability. The contribution of a conception of hope that bridges the gap between human imperfection, uncertainty and the duty to perfect oneself, is to show that there is an interesting middle ground available to the Kantian educator; accepting human imperfection and vulnerability as ineliminable, uncertainty as a fact of human agency and yet, allowing for a response to these limitations through hope.

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